

# Antibiotics

## It's a fact.

### Not taking all of your antibiotic may jeopardize your health.

Many people think it's no big deal if they don't finish every pill when their doctor prescribes an antibiotic. Sometimes when people start to feel better, they figure they don't need to complete their therapy. If this sounds familiar, you have lots of company.

A recent Gallup survey found that the majority of Americans don't take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. You can help yourself get better this winter by following these tips for taking your antibiotic medicine properly.

### Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

Respiratory tract infections caused by bacteria often require prompt medical attention and treatment with antibiotics. If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, ask what to expect from the medicine, when and how to take it properly (for example, with or without food), and about possible side effects. If you're confused, ask your pharmacist or get instructions in writing. Antibiotics will not work for colds, influenza, or any other viral infection. Do not expect or insist that your doctor prescribe an antibiotic for a viral respiratory infection.

### Follow directions: Take the full prescription.

Once you start to feel better, you may be tempted to stop taking your antibiotics prematurely. Take the full course of your antibiotic exactly as prescribed. If you don't take all your medication, the bacteria that causes your infection might not be killed and your illness may not improve. Some bacteria could even become stronger, causing an infection that is harder to treat. This means you may have to spend more time and money getting rid of your infection. You might even have to be hospitalized.

## Don't borrow or use old antibiotics.

Specific antibiotics are effective against specific bacteria and not others. In fact, your doctor may need to get results from laboratory tests to make sure you are taking the correct antibiotic. For this reason, use only antibiotics prescribed specifically for your illness by your physician. Take all the pills as prescribed. Don't share leftover medicine with others. Don't take antibiotics yourself without a doctor's knowledge, especially pills in your medicine cabinet left over from previous prescriptions.

## Take your antibiotic at the same time(s) each day.

Antibiotics work best when taken according to a specific schedule. Some antibiotics must be taken 3 or 4 times a day for up to 14 days, while others may need to be taken only once a day for as few as 5 to 7 days. If you make taking medicine part of your daily routine (e.g., after brushing your teeth or before going to bed), you'll have an easier time remembering to do so. If

your schedule doesn't permit you to take antibiotics at the times prescribed, be sure to tell your doctor. It's very important to adhere to the prescribed antibiotic schedule. And remember, keep all medicine out of the reach of children.

## Report unusual reactions.

Some people react to certain antibiotics. Your physician should be told if you have any known allergies to medication or unexpected reactions while taking your medication. Be sure to ask your physician or pharmacist about common side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or about unusual serious side effects, before you begin your treatment.

